



Vermont Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board

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To: Sen. Susan Bartlett, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
Rep. Martha Heath, Chair, House Committee on Appropriations
From: Brian S. Flynn, ScD, Chair, Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board
Re: **Tobacco Control Program funding in FY 2010**
Date: February 18, 2009

The Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board is strongly opposed to the administration's recommended 50 percent cut in Vermont's tobacco control program. We know that the State faces difficult challenges. Nonetheless the proposal to cut Department of Health funding for the tobacco control program from \$3.8 million to \$1.9 million is unwise. Such a cut could result in higher Medicaid costs and poorer health outcomes among Vermonters for years into the future.

Vermont has created an effective, evidence-based, comprehensive program of tobacco control. Recent research establishes that:

- **Tobacco control programs reduce adult smoking prevalence independent of all other factors.**
- **Tobacco control program reductions in adult smoking result in decreased heart attacks, lung cancers, and many other cancers and lung diseases.**
- **Tobacco control program reductions in adult smoking translate into significant reductions in annual Medicaid expenditures.**

The decrease in adult smoking prevalence from the beginning of the Vermont program in 2001 to 2006 is estimated to have saved \$4-5 million in Medicaid costs alone *each year*. Researchers estimate that California's tobacco program reduced all personal health care expenditures by \$86 billion in 15 years at a cost of only \$1.8 billion, a 50 to 1 return on investment.

Vermont's adult prevalence of 17.6% smokers is much higher than our goal of 11% by 2010. Substantial further gains in adult smoking reductions are achievable through sustained program investments. We need continued investment in tobacco control both to maintain lowered youth smoking rates, and to realize the health benefits and cost savings of helping more adult smokers quit. The proposed decrease in the Department of Health's tobacco control budget cuts the main program components that provide quitting assistance to adult smokers.

The investment needed to achieve these benefits for our citizens is a small portion of the millions of dollars paid to the State under the Master Settlement Agreement. That money was intended as compensation for the harm done to the State and its people by tobacco use. Yet, in FY09, the tobacco control program received only 13% of Master Settlement Agreement payments to Vermont; this is well below the 33% Vermonters recommended (1999 Tobacco Task Force report), and just half of what the CDC recommends for tobacco control in Vermont.

We urge you not to make the proposed dramatic cut in an effective program that directly benefits the health of many Vermonters and contributes substantially to health care cost control.